

# Inspiring Learning for All: an online resource from MLA

Inspiring Learning for All is an innovative new framework from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), which outlines an exciting vision for learning and access for the sector.

Launching Inspiring Learning for All in London in March, Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, said: "museums, libraries and archives have a vital role in inspiring learning across the community. This new framework will equip them to respond to the latest developments in learning and teaching and develop their services in innovative ways".

Inspiring Learning for All was developed in consultation with over 500 professionals from the museums, libraries and archives sector, and was piloted in 40 organisations across the UK.

## A definition of learning

Learning is defined in its broadest sense within the framework:

'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas and feelings, or an increase in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.' [1]

This definition encompasses lifelong learning through a variety of learning styles and in a wide variety of settings, formal and informal. Crucially, it also encompasses a broad range of learning outcomes including creativity, inspiration, enjoyment and an appetite to learn more.

## Organisational change

The framework is based on the premise that learning should be at the heart of everything that museums, libraries and archives endeavour to do. It declares that, as well as being firmly focused on the quality of services to users, museums, libraries and archives should also strive to be learning organisations, providing opportunities for staff at all levels to learn and develop.

As such, Inspiring Learning for All is aimed at senior managers and key decision-makers.

## Online learning resource

The Inspiring Learning for All website is a practical tool which:

- describes the features of accessible museums, libraries and archives to inspire learning, and
- provides a wealth of practical support materials, guidance and case studies to enable organisations to achieve accessible learning goals.

## Measuring learning

A distinctive element of the framework is the section on 'Measuring learning' which contains a unique methodology for measuring the impact of learning in the particular context of museums, libraries and archives. A series of Generic Learning Outcomes have been developed by a team from Leicester University, under the Learning Impact Research Programme.

There are five Generic Learning Outcomes:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills
- Attitudes and values
- Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity
- Activity, behaviour and progression

Much emphasis is placed within the framework on the need to collect credible evidence of the impact of museums, libraries and archives on people's learning, and the contribution that the sector makes to people's quality of life and well-being.

## Inspiring Learning for All in the North West

MLA North West has been tasked with implementing Inspiring Learning for All across the region and we will be tackling this in a number of ways:



## Advocacy to senior managers and trustees

Inspiring Learning for All is designed to assist with business planning. It has implications for all aspects of an organisation or service, not just the education or learning department. Indeed, if it is to be successfully utilised, Inspiring Learning for All requires complete engagement by those at the very top of the organisation.

## Advocacy with the wider learning and cultural sectors



MLA North West will continue to advocate the benefits of Inspiring Learning for All at key regional meetings and to key stakeholders and partners: local education authorities, learning and skills councils, the National Trust, the Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, to name a few already engaged.

## Working with pilot sites

Many museums, libraries and archives are already using Inspiring Learning for All to great effect, not least Knowsley Museum and Library Service and the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester - the two North West organisations involved in the MLA pilot study during 2002/03. Other notable organisations using the framework are highlighted in the following pages and we will be working closely with this group to support them in the process.

## Developing sub-regional networks

MLA North West is building on existing sub-regional networks to achieve the implementation of Inspiring Learning for All. A Learning and Access Officer is assigned to each sub-region for this purpose, and will be organising awareness raising events across the region, as well as training sessions

designed for practitioners to help them extend their use of Inspiring Learning for All beyond the web site.

Throughout this process we will utilise the expertise of the team at MLA who developed the framework and the academic team at Leicester University who developed the Generic Learning Outcomes.

## Funding

MLA North West will target programme development funding towards projects which will assist organisations to address areas in need of development, as identified by the Inspiring Learning for All framework - for example, audience development across the sector or adult basic skills provision.

All recipients of programme development funding will be introduced to Inspiring Learning for All and will be encouraged to use the framework to fit their circumstances.

## A regional action plan for learning and access

MLA North West has developed a 3-year action plan for learning and access, which is closely linked to Inspiring Learning for All and its aims.

The action plan is informed by a research project which has involved many stakeholders from across the region and beyond, engaged in lifelong learning, formal learning in schools, further and higher education, as well as family and community learning. This project will determine the evidence of needs across the region, and will gather evidence of current provision in museums, libraries and archives in the North West.

[1] Adapted from the Campaign for Learning through Museums and Galleries definition – for more information see <http://www.clmg.org.uk>

## Contacts

Learning and Access Officers taking the lead on the implementation of Inspiring Learning for All in the North West are:

**Jane Fletcher**

– based at our Cumbria Office  
[jane.fletcher@mianorthwest.org.uk](mailto:jane.fletcher@mianorthwest.org.uk)

**Nicola Siminson**

– based at our Warrington Office  
[nicola.siminson@mianorthwest.org.uk](mailto:nicola.siminson@mianorthwest.org.uk)

**Heather Tipler**

– based at our Cumbria Office  
[heather.tipler@mianorthwest.org.uk](mailto:heather.tipler@mianorthwest.org.uk)

**Jo Ward**

– based at our Warrington Office  
[jo.ward@mianorthwest.org.uk](mailto:jo.ward@mianorthwest.org.uk)



# The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester



## Using Inspiring Learning for All for organisational change

The Museum was a pilot in 2002 for the development of the Inspiring Learning for All framework in 2002. This involved using the draft framework to assist in producing the new Corporate Plan 2003-07 and Access & Learning Strategy 2003-07. An audit of the Museum's access and learning provision was undertaken using the draft Inspiring Learning for All checklist. All managers participated in this, and in discussing the Museum's strengths and weaknesses, resulting in consensus about the priorities for action.

These included:

- *community development;*
- *audience research to understand the needs of existing and potential users;*
- *developing and recruiting staff to support learning provision.*

Measures to address these three areas for development were included in the new Corporate Plan and Access & Learning Strategy. The Museum's trustees were also engaged in the pilot process, and a small working group of trustees worked with managers in developing the Access & Learning Strategy. Progress on the implementation of the Strategy is reviewed by trustees on a quarterly basis. In addition to undertaking the audit, the framework was used to

define the aims and priorities for placing learning at the heart of the Museum, and planning the work programme to achieve this. These included:

- *Appointing a Community Development Officer to co-ordinate engaging diverse communities and those at risk of social exclusion in the work of the Museum, and creating a further new post – that of Curator (Community History) – to work with the Community Development Officer on engaging Manchester's communities in Museum-related learning programmes, producing exhibitions and other initiatives.*
- *Commissioning a strategic marketing study using the results of audience research undertaken in recent years in order to inform production of an audience development strategy.*
- *Engaging all staff in learning provision, with the intention ultimately of creating a site-wide learning culture; this process was initiated by running awareness sessions on access and learning with all staff (details of the workshops can be found on the Inspiring Learning for All framework website at [www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk](http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk)).*

In April 2004, Dr Ian Griffin took up the post of Director at the Museum. Ian was formerly Head of the Office of Public Outreach for NASA's Hubble Space Telescope; inspiring learning was 'second nature' to him. As part of producing the Museum's new Strategic Plan, a fresh audit was undertaken. This time all Museum staff were invited to carry out the audit in four workshop sessions, led by four learning 'advocates' selected from different departments. As before, the Inspiring Learning for All checklist and supporting materials downloaded from the Inspiring Learning for All framework website were used in undertaking the audit.

In general, the second audit has shown that we have improved in the three areas – community development, audience research and development and workforce development – identified in the first audit as key subjects to address. However, there is still more we need to do in each of these areas! The main issues that have arisen from the second audit are:

- *consistency across the Museum;*
- *setting standards and good working practice within the Museum for all to follow.*

Some of the specific issues resulting from the recent audit are as follows:

- *Endeavouring to meet learners' needs is a core function in some areas of the Museum, but less so in others.*





- *We are consulting more widely with new audiences, but need to develop mechanisms to ensure that comments are fed back into Museum policy and developments.*
- *We are developing and extending our learning opportunities, but need to have a more consistent approach to how we measure and evaluate the learning taking place.*
- *Having an Access and Learning Strategy has made us more focused and has encouraged the development of more effective partnerships with other learning organisations. However, we need to develop a strategy for obtaining feedback from partners and incorporating this into how we work.*

In essence, the main conclusion to draw from this is that we have started embedding learning at the heart of our work, but we need to put emphasis now on becoming consistent and more holistic in our approach. This is currently being addressed in creating and implementing the new Strategic Plan for the Museum.

## Using Inspiring Learning for All for workforce development

In putting learning at the heart of our work, we are engaging all staff in learning provision, with the intention ultimately of creating a site-wide learning culture with knowledgeable and confident staff. This process has been initiated by a workforce development programme to:

- *encourage an awareness of learning;*
- *develop staff knowledge;*
- *foster inter-departmental working;*
- *develop appropriate skills.*

The programme began with awareness sessions on access and learning where definitions were agreed and staff roles discussed. This is being followed by running sessions on learning styles, where staff recognise the different styles and identify their own style, as well as exploring ways of developing galleries, exhibitions and other activities to engage people with different learning styles.

Early on, four 'inspiring learning ambassadors' were identified from each of the Museum's main front-of-house service delivery departments – visitor services, public programmes, collections and access & learning – to run the second audit sessions and to spearhead the development of learning provision within their own work areas. The four ambassadors were chosen as people who, despite not being managers, were in a position to participate in a number of projects involving cross-departmental working groups. In the first instance, each ambassador is leading the use of the Inspiring Learning for All framework in an activity currently being undertaken within their department.

The next step is reviewing and rewriting the Museum's training and development policy and plan, as well as developing projects which enable staff to experiment with using the Generic Learning Outcomes as a means of planning and evaluating activities.

## Getting to grips with the Generic Learning Outcomes

As part of the process to engage staff in learning provision, we have started to get everyone familiar and confident in using the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs). We are doing this by taking pilot projects in each of the Museum's key functional areas, e.g. exhibition development and public events programming, and trialling ways of using the GLOs to influence the development of these projects. At this stage, the main pilot projects underway are as follows.

- *For the refurbishment of the Power Hall and the development of the Air & Space Gallery, the project teams are generating GLOs to inform front end evaluation, preparing the gallery briefs and producing the story lines.*
- *In creating a science show to accompany a forthcoming special exhibition, GLOs are being used to evaluate and measure the impact the event will have on visitors' learning.*
- *A family event to take place in the Collections Centre is being developed and evaluated using GLOs.*

The process will be extended over the next few months to include other areas of the Museum's work, for example revising the formal learning programme for schools.

## Summary and conclusion

The key things we have learnt so far can be summarised as follows.

- *Using the Inspiring Learning for All framework is an organic process, and not a rigid methodology that can be imposed on current working practice.*
- *It is important to find a means to make the Inspiring Learning for All framework work for you, and not the other way round.*
- *The Inspiring Learning for All framework will not provide a 'quick fix'; it is essential to work at your own pace rather than trying to obtain rapid results.*
- *Using the Generic Learning Outcomes can help give focus to an activity or a project; indeed, they can be used as a starting point for any activity, whether strategic or operational.*
- *The Inspiring Learning for All framework can be used as a mechanism to stimulate changes in both the quality of services to users and staff working practices.*

In conclusion, we have found that the Inspiring Learning for All framework is a powerful set of toolkits which can be used not only to help bring about change in an organisation's ways of working, but also for fostering creativity within the workforce.

Contact: Robin Holgate, Head of Collections and Learning

# Inspiring Learning – Changing Culture

## Inspiring Learning for All across the region

### Tameside Museum and Galleries Service

Tameside Museums & Galleries Service is approaching Inspiring Learning for All with a healthy mix of pragmatism and enthusiasm. Due to its potential role in registration and funding, it is something we felt that we needed to embrace, rather than viewing it with too much suspicion and cynicism. Education is already at the heart of much of our work. We do not have a divide between curatorial and educational staff - they work together as a close-knit team. Although not all curators are completely happy about the current emphasis on education rather than curatorial and collections issues, they can see that our involvement in Inspiring Learning for All will be of benefit to the service in the long-term. We have also approached it in such a way as to not make it too onerous and work-heavy.

Museums Manager, Emma Varnam, and Education Officer, Ali Davenport, are jointly leading on Inspiring Learning for All. One of the site managers, Barbara Latham, is playing a key role in the development and collation of evaluations, with Cathy Fisher, Business Manager, keeping Front of House staff informed and up to date.

An Away Day was held in early May to take a practical look at how we introduce Inspiring Learning for All into our evaluation process. It was also an opportunity to reflect on what we mean by learning, for ourselves as individuals, as well as from a service point of view. By the end of the day we had a select list of activities and events that different staff were going to evaluate using the Inspiring Learning for All approach rather than the existing, standard way of evaluating.

We are still piloting, but the results so far have been very positive. One of the approaches within Inspiring Learning for All which we were keen to test out was the use of evaluations to collect hard data from comments. It takes a bit of time to work out how to do this, but it is definitely worth it. Results from children who attended an Art Day in July and a schools project in the summer term, 'Canals: then & now', undeniably show that learning took place - with a great sense of enjoyment and fun.

We are also getting hundreds of responses from general visitor questionnaires at each site. There is something about the wording and approach of Inspiring Learning for All evaluations that seems to appeal to people more than the usual comments box.

The Inspiring Learning for All website has been useful in providing ideas and tools on how to approach the subject, although there has been a degree of keeping our fingers crossed in the hope that we are interpreting the material correctly. We seem to be on the right track, however. Rather than the usual bland statistics (e.g. 'rate the museum from excellent to poor'), the Inspiring Learning for All approach is allowing us to really capture the visitor experience in a much more vivid way, whilst giving us the hard proof we need in the current climate.

Finally we decided to use the Inspiring Learning for All tool to help us drive improvement within the service. Continual Improvement is high on the agenda for Tameside Council, and great emphasis is placed upon improvement projects and processes. Previous models for improvement have not fitted well with our operation. However the use of qualitative rather than quantitative evidence provided by Inspiring Learning for All is ideal for our purposes. The policy department within the council will watch the use of the Inspiring Learning For All framework closely. We hope that by April 2005 we will be able to demonstrate how we have identified and carried out improvements using this model.

*Contact: Emma Varnam, Museums Manager*





## Whitworth Art Gallery

As a university gallery, with learning already at the core of our organisation, we are using Inspiring Learning for All to inform our practice across the board. Pilot studies undertaken with a range of user panels have placed the “learning experience” and “extent of knowledge” at the heart of our consultative process; the Gallery’s Development Officer is actively using the funding templates; we have developed generic evaluation based on the Generic Learning Outcomes for all visitors engaged in one of our programmes (from school and college groups to individual researchers and community groups); and Inspiring Learning for All is key to our current forward planning process.

Much education work over the last five years such as cross-artform programmes, resource development and teaching at all levels have been informed by research on multiple intelligences and different learning styles. Inspiring Learning for All has focused attention on how we measure the impact of such work.

“Diagonal slice” workshops exploring learning styles and outcomes have involved all members of staff (including volunteers) and yielded fresh insights into how we operate and learn - as individuals and as an institution. Although there was much heated debate about accessibility, interpretation and the visitor experience, there was consensus about the unique nature of what the Whitworth has to offer and its potential. As a result of such debates, the workforce development that is being carried out by the North West Museums Hub is using Inspiring Learning for All to address many of these issues.

Contact: Esmé Ward, Head of Education



## Heritage Services in Chester

Heritage Services in Chester have undergone many changes in the last six months. This has included the creation of new posts, the amalgamation of the museum and education services under one manager, and the incorporation into the department of both Chester History and Heritage and the Chester City arm of the County Record Office. In practice, this has highlighted the need for each area of the service to work more closely together, to

have a greater understanding of everyone’s role, and to change culture. Learning is not confined to the education team, it is part of everyone’s job.

To this end a working party has been developed to explore the Inspiring Learning for All framework and become advocates for it. This group includes representatives from front of house, curatorial, education staff, senior management, local studies and archives.

In the first meeting the group explored their understanding of learning and carried out the quick checklists. The group is now working on the more detailed checklists with the rest of their teams. It is hoped that the group will work together on a pilot project and develop a formal strategy for learning using the framework as the basis. It is also hoped that by using the approaches of the framework, the services will become true learning organisations, and that every member of staff will know how they contribute to developing and delivering quality learning opportunities.

Contact: Sue Hughes, Museum Education Manager, Grosvenor Museum

## Inspiring Learning for All at National Museums Liverpool

Museums and galleries of the future will be differentiated not only by their world collections, scholarly achievement and physical environment, but by the quality of the learning experience they offer. Recognising this fact, National Museums Liverpool (NML) has begun to focus its energies to develop a national museum where creativity, lifelong learning and social inclusion (supported by robust strategic planning) form the fundamental basis for the delivery of innovative exhibitions, learning programmes, academic study and visitor care.

NML is developing an inclusive and resourceful museum agenda, which will challenge and educate its employees, visitors and partners enabling them to unleash their creative potential. NML is changing to embed learning in museums and museums in learning.

To assist NML in achieving these aims the organisation is currently in the process of implementing a strategy based around the Inspiring Learning for All framework across the whole NML organisation and wider audience base. This strategy is split into two interrelated components – internal development and audience development.

The internal development component consists of rolling out a presentation to all members of NML (710 total) emphasising the key message that providing and supporting learning is the responsibility of all members of the organisation.

The presentation is being delivered by members of NML's Learning Division and is to take place over a two month period. The aims of the presentation are to stimulate debate about learning, develop a 'momentum' about the Inspiring Learning for All framework and help promote ownership of the learning experience amongst NML staff.

The audience development consists of establishing a Learning Communication Network across the Merseyside region consisting of schools, community groups and other key stakeholders.

NML plans to initially address issues related to the Key Stage two learning offer. Five schools are to work with NML closely on five projects based at different NML venues. The idea is to develop suitable evaluation

techniques based on the Generic Learning Outcomes specified in the Inspiring Learning for All framework. This will be an iterative process between three key stakeholders - the pupils, teachers and NML staff. The process will continue until all parties are satisfied that the evaluation technique can be used effectively to focus the learning offer.

NML plans to share best practice about implanting Inspiring Learning for All amongst other museums, libraries and archives. The Learning Communication Network will be expanded and used to further focus the NML learning offer.

*Contact: Paul Khan, Head of Core Programmes*

## Inspiring Learning for All in Knowsley

The Library Service and Museum Service in Knowsley were selected to be involved in the national pilot project for Inspiring Learning for All. The initial responsibility was to evaluate the Self Assessment Framework, which examined how we support learning and access in the widest sense. This process assisted us in identifying strengths and weaknesses in our learning provision, gave us insight into each other's services, and provided the opportunity to develop a more effective learning partnership.

As a result of this initial work we successfully applied for funding to carry out a project involving the museum and the school library service. The funding provided the resources for Kit Boxes on a Victorians theme which were used by museum and library staff with primary school children as part of an After School Activities Programme. We used this project to evaluate the framework and found that we needed to employ a variety of techniques, for example: diaries, questionnaires, observations etc. We were then asked to progress to Phase 2 of the Inspiring Learning for All project which involved evaluating current evidence from questionnaires and surveys, which could demonstrate the impact we were having on learning.

The work that was carried out as part of the pilot study has certainly changed our way of thinking and we are currently examining how we can practically embed the principles of Inspiring Learning for All in our planning, delivery and evaluation of initiatives.

Knowsley Library Service has recently been through a restructuring process, and we plan to use Inspiring Learning for All in our awareness training on the learning agenda with





all our staff, and we see it as a tool to enable us to deliver Framework for the Future and measure its impact.

Contact: Pam Jones, Learning Services Manager

## Inspiring Learning for All in Lancashire

In Lancashire County Council, museums, libraries and archives reside within the Educational and Cultural Services Directorate, and are therefore linked to county-wide agenda relating to arts, culture, youth and community services, ICT, education and lifelong learning. Museums, libraries and archives services have the challenge of proving their contribution to this broad agenda, and to the county's clear objectives in the fields of equal opportunities and social inclusion.

The Council has recently undergone a 'Culture Change' programme that focuses amongst other things on performance. We had been concerned for some time that the current Best Value Performance Indicators fail to measure the impact of museums, libraries and archives on people's lives. However, the Inspiring Learning for All framework and its various checklists offered us an alternative approach to performance measurement and to proving our case. We felt it offered tools to improve the advocacy for museums, libraries and archives within the Directorate and the Council. We presented the Inspiring Learning for All framework to the Cultural Services Performance Improvement Board, which has agreed that the framework would form a useful part of a broader performance framework that would add value to the existing Best Value Performance Indicators.

Further, a joint meeting with the senior team in the School Standards Department, confirmed that we had common objectives and, more importantly, that the language used by Inspiring Learning for All was instantly recognisable and intelligible to education experts.

The Inspiring Learning for All pilots had confirmed that the framework will not work without senior-level champions, so the heads of museums, libraries and archives agreed to work together on implementing Inspiring Learning for All and to take a proactive lead. We jointly held an awareness and advocacy workshop with senior managers of the Directorate. The response from colleagues in the Directorate was very positive. For the first time we were all talking the same language and the benefits of museums, libraries and archives to formal and informal learning were high on the agenda.

Contact: Edmund Southworth, County Museums Officer

## Inspiring Learning for All at the Manchester Museum

In January 2004, in anticipation of the Inspiring Learning for All launch, the Manchester Museum created a post (Inspiring Learning Coordinator) to introduce and embed the principles in the Museum's practice. The Coordinator has been using

Inspiring Learning for All to support cross-divisional teams of staff in developing their skills while delivering strategic objectives.

Through these strategic planning teams, the framework has helped the Museum to develop a set of action plans in seven specific areas (academic strategy, learning and access, acquisitions and disposals, documentation, audience development, CPD and income generation). The process has also highlighted the steps we need to take to improve our effectiveness as a learning organisation.

Inspiring Learning for All tools were used to provide support and training, for example:

- *Learning Organisations*
- *Talking about Learning*
- *Understanding Learning Styles*

The Free Lunch Club (team leaders) met regularly to review progress and build their own confidence and skills through practical workshops, for example:

- *Leadership skills*
- *Set up a team*
- *Teams, teamwork and piloting tips*

Although there is still a degree of scepticism surrounding Inspiring Learning for All, by the time the Strategic Action Plans were completed, most of the staff felt that the experience had some value. They shared a clearer focus and sense of optimism about the future.

Feedback from the Strategic Target Team leaders and team members suggests that Museum staff benefited from the process in a number of ways:

- *As the project took shape, people felt better informed about the structure of the Museum and their place in it*
- *They gained a clearer understanding of areas of work outside their normal sphere (and sometimes within it!)*
- *They recognised the impact that their work has on their colleagues (and vice-versa)*
- *They enjoyed working with colleagues they didn't usually come into contact with*
- *They gained insight into their own ways of working and more empathy with colleagues' attitudes and values*
- *They acquired useful practical skills, including (for some of them) managing meetings, focusing discussions, organising information and reporting, involving and communicating with a wide range of different people*
- *They gained an appreciation of how difficult strategic planning is in an institution as complex as the Manchester Museum*

The next challenge is to employ the Inspiring Learning for All framework as the foundation for a new evaluation strategy that will include all the Museum's facilities and activities. This development will be guided by the Inspiring Learning Coordinator.

Contact: Pete Brown, Inspiring Learning Co-ordinator